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DESCRIPTION OF A CROMLEAC AND OGHAM MONUMENT NEAR CASTLETIMON CHURCH, COUNTY OF WICKLOW.

BY MR. J. C. TUOMEY, N. T.

DURING a recent ramble through one of the many beautiful glens into which Wicklow county is cut up by its innumerable hills and mountains, my attention was attracted by some gray stones, standing in an upright position, by the side of what appeared to me a large mass of rock of the same colour. On a closer examination the group proved to be the component parts of what had once been a very fine cromleac. With the exception of the covering-stone having slipped from its original position, the monument appears to be in as perfect a state as it was when first erected.

This cromleac stands nearly in the centre of a small pasture field, belonging to a man named Brennan, in the townland of Brittas, parish of Dunganstown, and barony of Arklow, about seven Irish miles from the town of Arklow, five from Wicklow, and one from the sea-coast at Brittas mill, on the old sea road leading from Arklow to Wicklow. The field has a northern aspect, and slopes down to the right bank of the little river Potter, or "Potter's river," from the nearest point of which the cromleac is distant eighty-nine paces. At fifty-eight paces from the cromleac the land dips down suddenly, and presents an almost perpendicular declivity of various depths; the remaining thirty-one paces to the river's brink are over a dead flat or marsh.

In the adjoining field on the opposite side of the river, on a southern slope, stand the ivy-covered ruins of Castletimon Church, surrounded by a goodly array of tombs and head-stones, whilst a little to the north of the burial-ground, Castletimon hill flings its shadow over the valley of the Potter. From the top of this hill the *legend* has it, that some mighty giant of old hurled the covering-stone at his brother giant of Ballinaclea hill in a moment of anger, but, falling short of its intended aim, the stone rested on the bank of the river, there meeting the pillar-stones flung by him of Ballinaclea at his antagonist of Castletimon.

This certainly may be termed the battle of the giants, when I shall have given the dimensions and approximated weight of the "finger stones" thrown from the summits of two hills, at the least three miles distant from each other. When the people here speak of anything of a very zig-zag shape, they say it is as crooked as Potter's river, and here the river having dragged its slow length through the handsome valley of Dunganstown, crosses a road leading towards Wicklow, at Castletimon mill, a little to the westward of the cromleac, which having passed, it pursues its course until it is lost in the sea at a place called Ballynacarrig, a little to the eastward

of the mill of Brittas. I have been thus something particular in describing the locality of the field in which the cromleac is situated, that parties who may feel an interest in visiting such a vestige of antiquity may find no difficulty in making out its whereabouts.

And now for the cromleac itself. The four pillar-stones I will number 1, 2, 3, and 4. No. 1 bears S. E. from No. 3; No. 3, N. W. from No. 1; No. 2 bears S. W. from No. 4; and No. 4, N. E. from No. 2. No. 1 stands nearly perpendicular, inclining a little to the N. W., and measures 6 feet 9 inches in slant height from the grass. The breadth of the east face of this stone at the base is 3 feet, and near the top, 2 feet 8 inches. Breadth of south face at base, 2 feet, and near the top, 1 foot 2 inches. Its girth about the middle is 9 feet 6 inches. No. 2 pillar-stone presents a very irregular surface; one point of its uneven south side, or rather edge, touches No. 1 stone. This stone forms an angle with the horizon of forty-five degrees or less; its slant height from the grass to its point is 5 feet, and its greatest breadth from the extreme point of its base west to where it touches No. 1, 6 feet 5 inches.

No. 3 stone is of more regular shape than No. 2, approaching something to a square; its slant height is 5 feet 5 inches, and its greatest breadth 5 feet 10 inches. It stands nearly perpendicular, and touches the north edge of No. 2. This stone measures 12 inches in depth at the top, and its girth taken nearly round the middle is 13 feet. I could not take the circumference of No. 2 at any useful point, in consequence of the enclosed space against it being filled up with small stones and briers. No. 3 has a whiter appearance than any of the others, and I could observe small particles of mica glittering on its surface, yet I think it is of the same description of stone as the rest; but having a smoother and clearer surface, the action of the weather has had a greater effect on it, and brought out the shining specks of mica.

The face of No. 4 stone is also extremely irregular: it stands at an angle of about fifteen degrees from the perpendicular, and comes to a jagged point at the top; its slant height is 7 feet 5 inches, and girth about the middle 12 feet 5 inches; its greatest breadth is 5 feet 7 inches.

All the slant heights are taken on the exterior faces or backs of the pillar-stones. I could not take them on the interior faces, as the enclosed space has been made a receptacle for the small stones gathered off the field from time to time. The pillar-stones Nos. 1, 2, and 4, all *incline* towards a common centre, but No. 3 leans in a contrary direction to the rest; this I attribute to the effect of the shock it received at the moment the covering-stone slipped to the ground. I also noticed the earth to be looser about the base of No. 3 than about any of the other three; in fact, there is a hollow about it; but I only state facts, and leave it to others more competent to draw conclusions.

The four pillar-stones enclose a space of nearly an elliptical form. As well as I could measure among the small stones, the distance from the inside of stone No. 2 to the inside of No. 4 was 10 feet; and from No. 1 to No. 3, 6 feet. The tops of Nos. 2, 3, and 4, are nearly on a level, with a gentle inclination down the hill; and as I could not well ascertain the relative perpendicular heights of the four pillar-stones, in consequence of the slanting position in which they stand, I adopted the following method:—I removed the small stones from the centre of the enclosure, until I came to the soft earth; and as the apices of Nos. 2, 3, and 4, are not far from being on a level with each other, I placed a straight rod across the enclosure, resting on the tips of Nos. 2 and 4. I then measured the perpendicular height from the spot from which I had removed the small stones, to the rod, and I found it to be 5 feet 8 inches. The top of No. 1 stone is also on a level with the highest point of the covering-stone.

Again, I laid the rod on the top of No. 1 and the covering-stone, and took the perpendicular height from the same point in the enclosure as before; and I discovered it to be 8 feet 7 inches; therefore, the top of pillar-stone No. 1 is 2 feet 11 inches above the level of the tips of pillar-stones Nos. 2, 3, and 4.

The distance from the top of No. 2 to No. 4, across the enclosure, is 4 feet 10 inches, and from No. 1 to No. 3, 7 feet 3 inches. If I be correct in my suggestion that No. 3 stone was diverted from its original position by the weight and velocity of the covering-stone, when sliding to the earth, and also by the great pressure which the covering-stone still exercises on No. 3, by reason of its resting a great portion of its weight on it,—the distance from the top of No. 1 to the top of No. 3 was not so much when the cromleac was erected, as it is at present.

The covering-stone rests its heel on the shoulders, or I should rather say the necks, of Nos. 3 and 4, and is of circular form. To a spectator placed in a straight line between it and the river, it has the appearance of the segment of a sphere standing on a portion of its circumference, and leaning from him, the two longest lines crossing each other nearly at right angles, measured 14 feet S.W. to N.E., and 12 feet 6 inches from N. to S. These lines include the thickness of the curved edges at the S.W., N., and N.E. points, but not at the south point, for reasons to be hereafter mentioned.

A portion of the underneath surface is smooth, and also of a circular shape, and measured 12 feet 3 inches from E. to W., but towards the south it is uneven, and of greater thickness than in any other part of it. The covering-stone projects 6 feet eastward over No. 4 stone, and 2 feet 2 inches westward over No. 3. In consequence of the uneven surfaces which the *heel* and under face of the cover present, and of the unequal thickness in different places,

I cannot accurately compute its solidity in cubic feet or yards. I ascertained that a cubic foot of the stone weighed nearly 228·24 pounds, avoirdupois. If we assume the covering-stone to be the segment of a sphere—diameter 12·25 feet, and height 2·88 feet—the solidity will be 181·92 feet, which I think too little. Now, let the covering-stone be the segment of a cylinder cut parallel to its base, and of the same diameter (12·25), and height 2·25 feet; then the contents will be 337·64 cubical feet, probably too much. Let us then take the average of both, and we have 259·78 cubical feet; but a cubic foot weighs 228·24 pounds, hence 259·78 feet will weigh 59292·1872 pounds, or 26 tons, 9 cwt. 1 qr. and 14 pounds, which is as near an approximation to the true weight as I can at present make.

The stone is of close, hard texture, of a dark blue colour when broken, and very heavy in proportion to size. I estimated its weight by comparison with a small stone of the same description.

The ruins of Castletimon Church are situated on the opposite side of the river. The eastern gable, with nearly the entire of the southern side wall, is gone. The western gable, with the north side wall of nave, and a portion of the chancel, is still standing, and almost covered with ivy. The church originally consisted of nave and chancel. The nave was entered by a door on either side, but the dressings of both doorways have been torn away, and now only present two large openings through the walls. A holy water stoup lies inside the northern doorway, of coarse granite stone, and of very rude workmanship. The burial-ground seems to contain the dust of the ancient sept of the Byrnes, who once mustered in strong force among the hills and fastnesses of this county. In fact, the great majority of the head-stones inform you that beneath “lie the mortal remains” of a Byrne. I have not noticed the prefix O as being used by any of the clan Byrne on their tombs.

At about 15 perches distant from the northern boundary of the church-yard, and on the left-hand side of the public road leading to the coast-guard station at Ballynacarrig, may be seen a gray stone about 5 feet long, 1 foot high, and between 1 and 2 feet wide. It presents rather an inviting resting-place for the foot-sore wandering mendicant, from which to watch the spiral columns of blue smoke ascend from the chimney-tops of the surrounding farm-houses, and, by an instinct peculiar to his craft, therefrom to divine the exact dinner hour of the peasantry—those hereditary benefactors of his race.

As a listless loiterer, and one of a class of Irishmen, in a worldly point of view, not much raised above the mendicant, I seated myself one fine evening in the month of July last, on this stone, to smoke my pipe, and contemplate the gray covering-stone of the cromleac in the little field on the opposite side of the “crooked Potter” beneath me. At the moment I sat down I was quite unconscious of the antiquarian character of my seat; for I was a stranger

in the neighbourhood, and had, as yet, no intercourse with the people.

My attention was first attracted by two small red crosses painted on the front of it,—the work of some idler. On looking more closely, I observed the *scores* or mystic characters on the edge of the stone; and as the grave will sometimes mingle with the gay, two different ideas took possession of my mind at the same instant,—one, that I had discovered an Ogham; and the other, a recollection of the *milk-scores* which I had so often seen on the inside of the cupboard door of a female friend of mine; but here the “round O” for the shilling was wanting.

I communicated the nature of my discovery to the Rev. James Graves, fearful that, on the side of a public road, within half a mile of the parsonage at Dunganstown, and in the county of Wicklow,—the *haunt* of a thousand and one *book-making* tourists, such an antique curiosity had long since been brought before the notice of the public. From that gentleman’s reply I believe that *my* Ogham is one hitherto undescribed, and I take leave to lay before the Society the following details of it. I also send a rough sketch of its front and upper faces, as it lies in a flat position against the ditch of the road. On the edge of this surface I have marked the mystic symbols in the relative positions in which they appear upon the front and upper faces of the Ogham stone, preserving, as nearly as possible, the direction of the scores.

The stone is of the same heavy, compact description as the covering-stone of the cromleac, both being of the common stone of the neighbourhood. It has a whitish appearance from the action of the weather, and from the moss with which the front of it is more or less covered, but when chipped or broken it presents a bluish tint. It measures 5 feet in length, and 1 foot in depth. At the top, or rounded end, its chord measures 13 inches, and at 1 foot from the top, its breadth is 16 inches. At 2 feet from the top, its breadth is 18 inches, and at 3 feet from the top, 17 inches. The underneath and back faces I have not seen, but I removed some clay which had fallen from the ditch on the upper face, so as to see the back edge of it; and I found that there were no scores marked on it. The back edge is of a very irregular shape.

The scores extend 3 feet along the front edge from the top towards the base, and in the centre of the base is a hole 6 inches by 3, and 2 inches deep. This hollow is of circular form, and this end of the stone appears to have been broken.

The scores begin at about the centre of the circular end. The first set contains five scores, and each score is two inches in length. They are not well defined on the stone, and I had to feel with my fingers, to ascertain the length of the incisions. I was obliged to find the lengths of others of them in the same manner. In the second set

there are but two scores, each five inches in length, and appearing on both faces. The next mark is but one inch in length, and, with the exception of this one, all the other short marks are cut across



the edge of the stone, and are each of them about an inch long. These marks I shall not designate as sets, but simply call them marks. The third set has four scores, each five inches long, and something curved. Then comes one mark. The fourth set has three scores, each score four inches in length; then come four marks drawn right across the edge of the stone. These four sets are inscribed on the front of the stone, but the second set extends to both faces. The fifth set has four scores, each score four inches long. The scores of this set are partly defaced, and are upon the upper face of the stone. Then follow five marks, drawn across the edge. The sixth set is composed of five scores drawn across the edge, and appearing on the front and upper faces, and the scores are each about seven and a half inches long. This set presents more or less the appearance of an impression left by a hand, and which must have given rise to the saying of the people—that all the scores are the marks of the fingers and nails of the giant who threw the stone from the top of Castletimon hill. After this set we have one mark, and underneath it on the front of the stone is seen engraved a small circle, or oval, less than an inch in diameter. The seventh set contains four scores, two of them three, and two, four inches long; then comes a mark. The eighth set has but three scores; each score three inches in length. Now comes the last bunch of marks, four in number; after which we have the ninth and last¹ set of scores, five in number, and each four inches long; this set is also partly defaced. By looking at the rubbing which I send, it will be seen that five sets of scores, or mystic symbols, are confined to the front surface of the Ogham stone; two sets to the upper surface, and two sets drawn across the edge, and appearing on front and upper faces. All the marks, save one, are drawn across the edge of the stone, and, with the exception of the mark between the third and fourth set of scores, are at right angles to it. I have now given as accurate a description

¹ The scores of this interesting Ogham, as represented in the woodcut above given, which was made from the

rubbing forwarded by Mr. Tuomey, seem to *commence* with the set which he calls the *last*.—EDS.

of the Castletimon Ogham stone as I possibly could, and shall close with a notice of the legendary lore associated with it.

The "giant's stone" is the name by which it is known in the neighbourhood, and we are told that it was thrown by him from the top of Castletimon hill, and that the scores are the marks of his fingers and nails when handling it, previous to flinging it down. Others admit the scores to be the marks of his fingers, but assert that it was kicked down, and that the hole in the end of it was made by the top of the giant's shoe when he struck it with his foot. If you object to the possibility of sending so large a stone such a distance with the force of a kick, you are met with the reply, "Oh! sure the same giant cast the big stone in Brennan's field" (the covering-stone of the cromleac) "from the top of the hill, at the giant of Ballinaclea, and if so, he could easily kick down this stone." Good logic, certainly—for the party who had the hand that threw the covering-stone had a foot sufficiently strong to kick the Ogham stone, and the latter only fell some sixty or eighty perches short of the former. The legend further saith, that once upon a time, and as the story-tellers say, "a very good time it was," a neighbour not having the fear of the "*good people*" before his eyes, took it home for a "*hob-stone*;" but those spiteful little gentry so annoyed him, by keeping the spoons, trenchers, and noggins dancing on his dresser every night that it remained in his house, that after a week he returned it to its former place. Others say that the man did not take it home, but only got it into his car for that purpose, and that the rest of the neighbours compelled him to throw it out again.

Again, you hear that when the Danes erected the altar (cromleac) in Brennan's field, it was on this stone they *scored* the number of kings they had beheaded in their travels; but that, being so hotly pursued after the battle of Clontarf by Brian Boru's soldiers, they dropped the stone here on the side of the road, as they ran down to their ships at Ballynacarrig.

Associated as the history of the Ogham stone is with these old stories, I am glad to find that the people would not wish to part with it. Some time ago a lady of rank in the neighbourhood wrote to the proprietor of the land on which the stone lies, for permission to have it removed to her own home. When this application was made known to the people, they evinced a reluctance to having it taken away. They were asked did they ascribe to it any *cure*, or *charm*; they said *not*, but that if it were of any value, the place in which it had rested for so many ages was best entitled to it.

The lively interest taken by these poor and primitive people in this vestige of antiquity does them great honour, and should put to the blush many in the higher ranks of life, who would probably think that Dunbrody Abbey would make a capital cow-shed, and the Ogham stone at Castletimon an excellent sill for the door of it.

The lady was refused, and the Ogham has a trusty warder in the person of a tailor named Hyland, residing within a few perches of it.

The Ogham stone is on the north side of the road, the field on the opposite side runs down the slope to Potter's river, and adjoining the river on the south side is Brennan's field, in which the cromleac is situated. In the north-west corner of this field is situated the old church and burial-ground of Castletimon; therefore, the cromleac, the church, and the Ogham, may be said to be in adjoining fields.

How long the Ogham stone may have remained in its present position I cannot say. A man now 38 years of age tells me he had it from a person who died at 86 years of age, that it was there when he was born; and not only that, but the man who died at 86 was told by his father, who died aged 80, that it was in its present place when the 80-year man was born.

I am now done with the Ogham, ruin, and cromleac, and shall leave them under the protection of the *genii* of Castletimon hill, and the peasantry of the neighbourhood; and I hope that the dreaded anger of the former, or the stout hands of the latter, may preserve them from the Vandalic clutches of those who would convert them into gate-posts, hob-stones, or road-metal.

NOTES ON THE TOPOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF HOOK, COUNTY OF WEXFORD.—PART I.

BY THE REV. JAMES GRAVES.

THERE are few portions of the southern coast of Ireland that present to the intelligent observer so interesting a field of inquiry, or to the sea-side loiterer such a variety of noble sea and coast views, as that extending from Bannow, by the headlands of Ingard and Baginbun to the point of Hook. The artist, the geologist, the natural historian, and the archæologist, have here food, enough and to spare, for their peculiar cravings, and for one who happens to combine a liking for each of these pursuits in his idiosyncrasy there is spread a rich banquet indeed. I do not, tempting though it may be, purpose at present, however, to extend my "notes" from Bannow to Hook, or, even were I competent for the task, to treat of the geology or natural history of the district further than may be absolutely necessary to elucidate the topography of the latter locality.

If we take the Ordnance index map of Wexford, and, reversing it, look at the south-eastern boundary of Waterford harbour, the pro-